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ABSTRACT

This article features questions and answers about "Kid Writing" (KW), the process of turning children who do not know the alphabet into fluent, proficient, and confident writers. According to the article, the questions were gathered during a live chat with the authors of "Kid Writing: A Systematic Approach to Phonics, Journals, and Writing Workshops" (Isabell Cardonick and Eileen Feldgus). The six questions in the first installment come from kindergarten and first grade teachers--some examples are: Do you have suggestions for working with the child who spends an extended period of time (too long) on the illustration, with little time for writing the "story" text? What tips do you have for an ESL kindergarten writing program? and How do you manage to get around to all students each day when you have no help? Some of the questions the kindergarten and first grade teachers asked in the second installment are: We started using KW in January. My kids are writing short sentences--Is there a way to encourage them to write more? Do you give topics to write on or do children think of things to write about? and What is "average" writing for K children by the end of the year? Please give an example. Examples of writing from level 4, level 5, level 6, and level 7 are attached. (NKA)

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"Kid Writing" Author Isabell Cardonick With Kid Writing Help.

by Kathleen Carpenter

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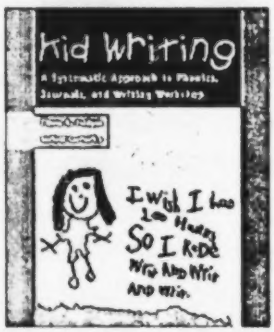
JUNE 2000

Volume 1 Number 4

Kid Writing Author Isabell Cardonick With Kid Writing Help

by Kathleen Carpenter



In this first of two installments **Isabell Cardonick**, teacher and co-author (with Eileen Feldgus) of Kid Writing: A Systematic Approach to Phonics, Journals, and Writing Workshop, answers questions submitted by kindergarten and grade one teachers. The topic is Kid Writing, the process of turning children who don't know the alphabet into fluent, proficient, and confident writers. Questions were gathered during a live chat with Cardonick and Feldgus in the Teachers.Net Meeting Room on May 23, 2000. The transcript of that session is available in the Early Childhood section of http://teachers.net/archive .

Here is the first set of questions and Isabell Cardonick's responses. The second installment will appear in the July issue of the Teachers.Net Gazette.

1. Do you have suggestions for working with the child who spends an extended period of time (too long) on the illustration, with little time for writing the "story" text? Have you any pointers for helping children put their emphasis upon the written narrative rather than on the drawing?

ISABELL: After the children have been given sufficient time, we tell them that they have another minute to complete the drawing. They know that they can go back to the drawing once they've finished writing. We also say that this is a good time to write the story because we now have time to help them. We always give them time to finish the drawing later.

2. I teach first grade and I have concerns about the children going to 2nd grade with teachers who don't embrace this technique. What are your thoughts about that situation?

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ISABELL: I'm not sure that I understand your concerns. Are you concerned because these teachers are workbook oriented and that your children won't have enough experience doing skills in isolation? If you believe in your teaching practice, this is not an issue. Children can learn quickly how to do phonics pages. The knowledge that they will have when they leave your "kid writing" classroom can never be taken away from them. I really need more information to answer this question completely.

If kids have done lots of kid writing, they will be very proficient at high frequency words and will have very thoughtful phonetic spellings for words not yet taught. They should be further along in their writing than kids who have not written daily and have not had mini-lessons addressing both the conventions and the craft of writing.

3. Could you briefly explain the magic line?

ISABELL: The magic line is an underscore: _____. It is used as a placeholder when the child can't figure out which letter/s he needs to write a word. The children know that for every spoken word, something has to be written down. In using the magic line, the children are empowered to write their thoughts using vocabulary in their oral vocabularies, not just words they know how to spell. In fact, it gives the total non-writer a tool to write. I find that most children don't need to use the magic line for more than a couple of weeks in the beginning of kindergarten. They quickly learn how to use letters and know that their kid writing will be honored. They learn conventional spelling quickly because of their constant exposure to it through the techniques described in Kid Writing.

4. How do you get them to use a bit of variety in writing? I get tired of reading "I see a ___. I see a ___. I see a __."

ISABELL: In the very beginning stages, we have little conversations with the children before they begin doing the kid writing. For example, if a child says "I see a bird," the teacher then might say, "Tell me about the bird. What is the bird doing? What will happen to the bird? etc, etc." The teacher really has some power in directing the child's writing. With children who are already writing independently, I would teach them to use variety during the mini-lesson phase. I would also call attention to the interesting sentences that authors use in good children's literature.

5. What tips do you have for an ESL kinder writing program?

ISABELL: There is a section of Kid writing which deals with ESL. (pages 54-57) It includes examples of kid writing done by children who did not speak English at all when they started school in September. We find that the process of stretching out words as recommended in Kid Writing, along with the pedagogical, emotional and physical environments that we describe, is very beneficial to the ESL child. Of course, it also helps to use lots of pictures and gestures with ESL children. I have found kid writing to work extremely well with ESL children, as have many of the "Kid Writing" teachers with whom I have spoken.

6. How do you manage to get around to all students each day when you have no help. I know that in the Kid Writing book you suggest parent volunteers. I didn't have any that would or could help this year. What solutions can you suggest?

ISABELL: I have done kid writing with one other adult in the room and 30 children in a half day program (2 1/2 hours). In this scenario, I was able to reach only half of the children each day. But the other half finished their drawings and listened and helped as the other children were doing their kid writing with the teacher. The next day, these children were ready to write first. There was a great deal of teaching and learning going on that benefited everyone - not just the kids who did the writing. Kid Writing is a very social process and is highly effective because of the social nature of literacy learning (Check out Lev Vygodsky's Social origins of thought http://csunix1.lvc.edu/~b_rehm/Lev_the_Man.html)

In Kid Writing, we describe how we maximize the social aspects (i.e.: letting kids sit together on the rug rather than in isolation at their desks) so that all the kids are learning...intensely and with great joy!

Continued in the July Gazette...

To read more about ***Kid Writing***, visit these archived live chat transcripts.

Kid Writing with Isabell Cardonick and Eileen Feldgus - http://teachers.net/archives/ec052300.html

Kid Writing with Isabell Cardonick - http://teachers.net/archives/ec082900.html

Kid Writing: A Systematic Approach to Phonics, Journals, and Writing Workshop with Isabell Cardonick - http://teachers.net/archive/ec122800.html

Kid Writing - (techniques a la Feldgus and Cardonick) - http://teachers.net/archives/ec112001.html

About Isabell Cardonick...

A 25 year veteran teacher, Isabell Cardonick is a summa cum laude graduate of Temple University and a recipient of Temple's Emma Johnson Award. She is a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Philadelphia Writing Project, and the International Reading Association. She conducts emergent literacy seminars and works with the many teachers who come to observe the dynamics of kid writing in her kindergarten classroom. Isabell is the 1999 Lincoln Cluster nominee for the Philadelphia School District's Rose Lindenbaum Improvement of Education Teacher Award.

About Eileen Feldgus...

Eileen G. Feldgus Ed.D, is a teacher who has been on special assignment to the Central Administration's Office of Assessment for the School District of Philadelphia for over 5 years. She is certified in early childhood and elementary education and has taught in the Parent Nursery Co-Op Program as well as in kindergarten and first grade. She holds a master of science degree and is certified as a specialist in reading and language arts from Beaver College. She also holds a doctorate in education in reading, writing, and literacy from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Feldgus teaches courses in children's literature at the University of Pennsylvania. She is a member of the International Reading Association, the Philadelphia Writing Project, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. She chaired the Emergent Literacy Committee of the Philadelphia Council of the International Reading Association.

Eileen's teaching philosophy and strategies center on focusing on the child as an active learner and can best be described as holistic, literature-based, skills-in-context, and cross-curricular. She recently received the Enos Andrews Outstanding Educator Award. She has presented at many conferences and leads professional development seminars in the field of early literacy.

Isabell and Eileen taught kindergarten at the same school, and, together, developed their innovative, exciting, and effective ways of furthering the literacy development of young children.

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The teachers.net Gazette

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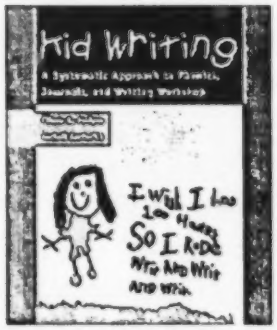
JULY 2000

Volume 1 Number 5

Kid Writing Author Isabell Cardonick With Kid Writing Help

Continued from the June Gazette...



In this second of two installments **Isabell Cardonick**, teacher and co-author (with Eileen Feldgus) of Kid Writing: A Systematic Approach to Phonics, Journals, and Writing Workshop, answers questions submitted by kindergarten and grade one teachers. The topic is Kid Writing, the process of turning children who don't know the alphabet into fluent, proficient, and confident writers. Questions were gathered during a live chat with Cardonick and Feldgus in the Teachers.Net Meeting Room on May 23, 2000. The transcript of that session is available in the Early Childhood section of http://teachers.net/archive .

Here is the second set of questions and Isabell Cardonick's responses. The first installment appeared in the June issue of the Teachers.Net Gazette.

We started using KW in Jan. My kids love to explain their writing process to people who visit! They are writing short sentences. Is there a way to encourage them to write more?

Just keep asking leading questions. For example, if a child wrote "I am playing hide and seek." I might ask "Who else is playing?" or "Where are you hiding?" I also think aloud when modeling writing. If I want my students to use more details in their writing, I'll model this by writing in my own demonstration journal. For example, I might begin by writing, "I have a new dress." I'd then say "Hmmm, I'll bet someone who reads my story will want to know what color the dress is. They might also want to know where I'm going to wear my new dress. So I think I'll add that information to my story." It's good to point out that the purpose for writing is usually to have other people read and understand the writing.

I have just begun to read your book. My question is how do you encourage kids to drop the magic line?

Most children stop using the magic line naturally because they simply don't need it any more. A truly balanced literacy approach provides total immersion in literacy experiences. Because they are exposed to so much writing (in books, modeled by teachers, done by other students), children begin to use letters very quickly - within the first week or two, usually.

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There are several factors which contribute to a "weaning" from the magic line when necessary.

The teacher encourages the children to think about sounds and letters while helping them to stretch out the words as they write.

The risk free environment is so important. Children aren't afraid to let go of magic lines because they are being praised for every effort they make - not chastised for using the wrong letter.

Finally, the mini-lesson phase offers the perfect opportunity to shape the children's writing behaviors. Simply praise the children who are using letters in their writing and watch what happens!

Do you give topics to write on or do the children think of things to write about?

Let the children decide! Kids write more and develop increasing proficiency in their writing when they write about things they know and care about!

The teacher can model how to choose a topic, however. When modeling writing in my demonstration journal I model various genres. In front of the children I might flip through my journal and say, "Hmmm. yesterday I wrote about something that really happened to me this summer. On Monday, I wrote about something we learned in school. I think today, I'll just make up a story. It won't be true...."

I very rarely have children say, "I don't know what to write." Drawing the picture first helps them to organize their thoughts. If, after drawing the picture, the child doesn't know what to write, I point to something in the picture and say, "Tell me about this part."

There may be occasions when I do give the children a topic. For example, on the 100th day of school, I might ask the children to write "If I had 100....." Of course, I model this for them and we brainstorm ideas together.

What proportion of your day is devoted to writing? Don't get me wrong...I think this is great. But I have district mandated stuff that interferes.

The children are immersed in reading and writing experiences all day long. I schedule 45 minutes to an hour for writing workshop, including the mini-lessons. Even when I taught 2 half day sessions, I spent the full 45 minutes daily. Nothing else I did contributed as much - minute for minute- as writing workshop. The payoff in literacy learning is tremendous!

Our current reading series, The MO Reading Initiative does not support kid writing at all. I know kid writing works. How would you justify the kid writing approach? Are there any articles you would quote? I have only taught for two years so I need some help supporting kid writing.

Kid Writing is an outgrowth of co-author Eileen Feldgus' doctoral dissertation that was done at the University of Pennsylvania in 1995. Throughout the book are research citations with full documentation at the ends of chapters. One of the strongest studies we have on this process is the research done by Dr Richard L. Allington with the Children's Literacy Initiative project that shows, without a doubt, that early writing is important and that our particular process was highly effective. There are also three new national reports calling for writing daily in kindergarten and grade one: The joint position statement of IRA and NAEYC, Preventing

Reading Difficulties in Young Children report from NIHCD, and the new Early Literacy Standards from New Standards.

But the proof lies with the children's extraordinarily high rates of achievement. Get started after you read the book - and the children's writing and reading skills will be your best endorsement!

What is "average" writing for K children by the end of the year? Please give an example.

The School District of Philadelphia uses the Conventions of Writing Developmental Scale (see page 169 in Kid Writing) By Philadelphia's standards, Level 4 (Semi-Phonetic) is proficient for kindergarten. Anything above that is considered to be advanced.

Of the 29 children in my urban, blue collar neighborhood classroom, there were three children on Level 4, ten children on Level 5 (Phonetic), thirteen children on Level 6 (Transitional) and 3 children on Level 7 (Conventional 1) on the Title 1 Writing Assessment which was given in May, 2000. The September baseline writing samples for all of these children were on Level 2 (Pictorial) and Level 3 (Precommunicative), with about 50 % in each category. For actual samples of Kid Writing, please visit the Kid Writing site at www.KidWriting.homestead.com . The site is under construction - I'll be adding kids' baseline writing samples as soon as I can find the time.

Examples of actual kid writing from this assessment:

Level 4 : Iam a Pargr rgn. I will sving. the yo . (I am a power ranger. I will save the earth) The child who wrote this is bi-lingual. He did not speak English in September.

Level 5: FAnK and I ARePlaying STAR WARS. FANK WILL hAVe ARAdLAkSVR And I Will haveABLuLiKSVR (Frank and I are playing Star Wars. Frank will have a red Likesaver and I will have a blue Likesaver.)

Level 6: The Butter-fly is flyinig arid My house. It saw a bee They eat naster from a flower. (The butterfly is flying around my house. It saw a bee. They eat nectar from a flower.)

Level 7: Ashley and I SAW two lateyBugs. they were eating Afids. We SAW two Birds. We SAW three butterflys drinking nekter.

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